

MINUTES
Kentucky Adult Education Advisory Committee
September 8, 2006

The Adult Education Advisory Committee met September 8, 2006, at 11:00 a.m. at the Kentucky Adult Education (KYAE) offices in Frankfort, Kentucky. Vice President Sarah Hawker presided.

The following members attended: Vicki Boyd, Patty Craig, Cris Crowley, Kathryn Hardman, Sarah Hornback, Margenia Keeton, JoEllen Mitchell, Brenda Morris, Julie Scoskie, Lisa Stethen, Bill Teegarden, Bev Thomson, Jonell Tobin, and Rocky Wallace. Bill Bates, S.J. Brennan and Sugar Willey did not attend.

KYAE staff in attendance: Sarah Hawker, Reecie Stagnolia, Stuart Johnston, Sandra Kestner, B.J. Helton, Janet Hoover, Marilyn Lyons, Terry Pruitt, David Walters and Ginny Sullivan.

WELCOME

Ms. Hawker welcomed members and recognized members as leaders representing all areas of the state. Ms. Hawker stated that KYAE looked forward to establishing feedback through discussion of significant matters and to identifying problems, barriers and solutions as we move into new policy areas.

Council President Tom Layzell joined the meeting to thank members for serving on the Adult Education Advisory Committee. Dr. Layzell stated adult education is a key component to achieving the goals of the Council on Postsecondary Education's 2020 Public Agenda. In order to meet the 2020 goals, we must not only get more adults into postsecondary education, but also find ways to keep them.

CHARGE

The purpose of this committee is to advise KYAE on policy, accountability, and data measures. The meetings will consist of free flowing, open conversation with members speaking their minds and sharing professional perspectives. Even if the committee does not reach consensus, it will inform KYAE of the scope of issue(s).

Ms. Hawker informed the committee that it is initially comprised of a core group of providers representing various types of instructional programs, areas of the state, and the KAAEC organization through its president. As the work of the committee progresses, other partner agencies may be identified and added to the group.

The committee will meet quarterly from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. A working lunch will be provided and mileage expenses will be reimbursed.

Ms. Hawker stated her commitment and that of KYAE staff to the Committee. She and the KYAE Leadership Team members for each office functional area will be in attendance at the meetings to hear and contribute to the discussions.

LEGISLATION REVIEW

Associate Vice President Reecie Stagnolia reviewed Senate Bill 1, the Adult Education Act of 2000, which established the link with the Council on Postsecondary Education that ultimately led to the transition of adult education services to the Council on Postsecondary Education by Governor's Executive Order in 2003.

Senate Bill 1 established lofty goals and required the development of a long-range plan. An efficient and coordinated system has been developed by the improvement or establishment of standards, improved monitoring of programs, a funding formula, the Kentucky Adult Literacy Survey, incentives to perform, rewards for meeting goals, and published communication campaigns to market services to clients.

KYAE anxiously awaits the new Kentucky Assessment of Adult Literacy Survey results to see what progress has been made. Although KAAL doesn't parallel the Kentucky Adult Literacy Survey measures, KYAE has asked researchers to crosswalk the data.

Ms. Hawker asked members to keep in mind that KAAL will give us rich information regardless of whether progress has been made or not. If progress hasn't been made, it will help guide and inform us about what needs to be changed in service mixes, instructional strategies, and needs at the county level.

Mr. Stagnolia gave an update on reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act, the source of KYAE's federal funds. Although WIA has been approved by House and Senate conference committees, we are not encouraged that it will be approved this year. KYAE will keep the field informed of the status of reauthorization, possible changes, and impacts to RFPs. Once WIA is reauthorized, KYAE will be required to have open competition for adult education services in the state. The latest version of WIA has both for-profit and faith-based organization implications.

JoEllen Mitchell asked about possible changes KYAE was considering pursuing for Senate Bill 1.

Mr. Stagnolia pointed out the tax credit section in which business and industry grants paid employee release time for GED preparation instruction and receives a tax credit with the employee eligible to access scholarship funds. Since the scholarship funds have yet to be accessed, it appears coupling the scholarship funds with paid release time and the tax credits has not been effective. Is it time to consider other ways to incent students to pursue a GED and postsecondary education?

Ms. Hawker indicated she has found remarkable understanding of the need for, appreciation of, and support for adult education among legislators and legislative staff. During meetings, one question keeps emerging -- we are great enrollment achievers, but are students making learning gains and achieving GEDs?

Mr. Stagnolia pointed out the Task Force on Adult Education Report from which Senate Bill 1 emerged. It set the stage and challenged us to think beyond federal legislation when considering use of state adult education funds.

Jonell Tobin, a former Task Force member, added that the legislature began connecting illiteracy to the bigger picture of healthcare and families and children.

Ms Hawker agreed adult education has an incredible ripple effect on parents, children and communities. Ms. Hawker asked members to suggest ways KYAE can assist local efforts.

OTHER

Members shared various experiences in seeking alternate funding sources and discussed the need for KYAE's assistance in identifying and accessing alternate funding sources that may be available, including WIA Title I Dislocated Worker Funds, Coal Severance Funds, and funds to serve Out-of-School Youth. News to Use was noted as a good resource to publicize funding opportunities.

Members inquired about funding of local P-16 Councils and adult education representation on the local councils. Ms. Hawker advised she sits on the State P-16 Council and is working closely with Council staff coordinating P-16 efforts to ensure that if KYAE puts money toward local efforts, then those projects must include an adult education component. Members shared individual experiences and expressed concern over sustainability of local P-16 efforts once the seed money is gone and the continuing need to establish and or continue adult education participation.

Members expressed the need for KYAE to help open doors for local programs to the Local Workforce Investment Boards. It was noted that some LWIBs have had the same adult education representative for many years and encouraged consideration of rotating representation with other adult educators.

Members noted adult educators learn to be all things to all people, but it is necessary to know the state priorities and options when developing local plans.

Members encouraged KYAE to inform local adult education providers of state priorities before the next legislative session begins. It was noted most local adult educators have good relationships with local legislators because they have been able to show results due to KYAE's accountability efforts.

PROGRAM SUPPORT TEAM

Ms. Hawker shared her experiences in meeting with local program staff since assuming the Vice President's office. She conveyed thanks to KAACE President Jonell Tobin and KAACE for hosting six receptions around the state to provide her the opportunity to meet and gather feedback from local program staff. Comments received confirmed many providers felt disconnected from the state office and wanted more contact with state staff, thus reaffirming her thoughts of a regional support system.

Beginning January 2007, KYAE will create six adult education regions in the state and assign staff to be regional program support associates.

KYAE has identified a charter Program Support Team who will receive intensive training to broaden their knowledge of KYAE policies and procedures. The Program Support Team will work with local programs on both programmatic and administrative issues, such as curriculum and instructional strategies, implementation of new or revised policies, AERIN data entry issues, and what needs to be contained in student files. The regional associates will be the first point of contact for local programs with other KYAE staff providing backup support.

David Walters has been promoted to Senior Associate and will supervise the Program Support Team. The current workforce education field associates and Donna Potter will become the six regional program support associates.

REGIONAL MEETINGS

KYAE will begin holding regular regional meetings to promote networking among local adult educators. Some meetings may be focused on a particular topic, some on general topics or to share best practices. Local providers have consistently conveyed the value of learning from one another and KYAE agrees this can't happen merely once a year at a state conference.

Ms. Hawker reiterated the Program Support Team would provide support as opposed to "technical assistance". Members liked the new focus on support, since technical assistance has a bad connotation.

David Walters indicated he sees the Program Support Team as a liaison between KYAE and the field to encourage networking both between and within regions, to disseminate information to all programs so that everyone is on the same page, and to have a main contact person for each region. He added the team has a lot of work ahead of them, because they must develop some expertise in all areas. It is anticipated regional associates will be working in the field the majority of the time rather than in the KYAE office. KYAE is investigating new technology to give providers multiple ways to contact their associate. The associate regional assignments will be released once plans are finalized.

Ms. Hawker asked members for feedback on the new regional endeavor. How can the program support associates be of most assistance?

Members supported the idea of having one main contact person.

Members agreed the opportunity to network is critical because they learn much from one another.

Members suggested the regional associate could help by observing programs and program staff and suggest ways to improve and to share best practices.

Members relayed experiences gained through a peer evaluation process in which an experienced adult educator, a new adult educator, and a state staff person conducted a site visit as more valuable for program improvement than the recent local audits.

Members expressed frustrations over audit experiences and requested programs be provided with the audit checklist in order to know what the auditor will be looking for and to identify what has to be maintained in a student folder.

There was concern expressed over the MUNIS and Adult Education budget crosswalk difficulties and pointed to the lack of knowledge of adult education as the cause of some audit findings rather than a real problem.

KYAE agreed to make the audit checklist available to programs. Terry Pruitt stated that KYAE receives the audit findings and local responses which are taken into consideration before KYAE makes final determinations.

Members suggested publishing a list of common problems/issues found in programs without identifying the specific program. Staff noted that KYAE is considering creation of a Frequently Asked Questions Web page to assist local programs. Members agreed the KYAE Website is easy to use and a good method of disseminating information as opposed to the more complicated Angel system.

Janet Hoover pointed out the News to Use index that cross references issues by topic and is updated monthly.

Julie Scoskie asked that KYAE consider the financial impact of policy changes on local programs. Since Jefferson County is such a large program, sometimes policy decisions have a huge financial impact. She cited the requirement for all instructors to have e-mail and the PDTrack rollout as having taken an enormous amount of staff time. Another cited example involves online courses. If KYAE says the course will take 21 hours to complete, she is required to pay the staff person for 21 hours.

Some members expressed concern about the professional development requirements for new part-time instructors versus full-time instructors.

Ms. Hawker asked about the impact on students and student achievements if someone is hired to teach a class, but is not prepared to teach.

Vicki Boyd gave an example of hiring two people to teach a class one night per week – one has a Rank 1 and the other is a Reading Specialist, but they are also required to go through the new adult education instructor professional development courses. After discussion, it was agreed that “new” doesn’t always mean someone who is fresh out of college or with little experience.

Sandra Kestner advised there is a mechanism in place to request exemptions on a case-by-case basis for this type of instance.

It was noted that the professional development requirements have also had an impact on the local audits. Bill Teegarden cited an example of the personnel worksheet projecting an employee’s salary at five hours per week, but the auditor questioned why the instructor was paid for 20 hours in a given week. The 20-hour work week was due to attendance at a required professional development training.

Sandy Kestner noted the Orientation to Adult Education online course replaces a two-day training and thus is less time consuming.

KET DUAL ENROLLMENT

B.J. Helton, GED Administrator, reviewed a proposal from KET suggesting a dual enrollment in the GED Connection (GED on TV) program and the local adult education center. Members were asked to give feedback on the KET proposal.

Kathryn Hardman reported her program was one of six consulted by KET about the dual enrollment program. She saw it as an answer to people who want books to take home, but indicated they didn't have a lot of control over when the individual takes the test.

Concerns and suggestions included the need for another assessment in the process to show level gain. Members agreed KET needs to understand the need for administering a TABE test to show progress.

Bev Thomas asked if the GED vouchers have expiration dates on them and if KET will honor the voucher if the test fee changes.

Members indicated the need for some type of accountability on referrals to adult education programs and questioned whether a confidentiality agreement would be used.

Dr. Helton reported KET enrolls approximately 650 students per year. KET reports that students call them because they don't want to go to an adult education center. KET has stated that feedback received from six programs consulted about the program indicated it solved the issue of the student having materials to take home and addressed some transportation issues.

Members agreed students need to be made aware before taking the GED Official Practice Test they must take a TABE test.

Overall consensus was more language was needed on the KET form so that the student is fully aware of what they are signing up to do and that TABE follow-up is required.

Members discussed the impact of passing the Official Practice Test on GED pass rates and agreed more research is needed when students achieve 480-520 on the Official Practice Test, but only score 380 on the GED.

JoEllen Mitchell reported she has been tracking OPT, GED, and TABE scores. Her research indicates a person functioning at the 10th grade level on TABE can pass the OPT with difficulty, but not the GED.

Kathryn Hardman suggested requiring the student to take two OPT math tests, since the math area on the OPT isn't extensive enough to determine ability to pass the math portion of the GED.

Julie Scoskie advised that Wayne Couvillon will be presenting a session on frequently missed items on the GED math test at the October 26-27, 2006 KAAACE Conference. His session will include a lot of test taking strategies as well.

Dr. Helton indicated many of these issues were identified in the GED Focus Group meetings. KYAE has requested data reports comparing GED pass rates by instructional program code as well as subject area.

KYAE STAFF UPDATES

Terry Pruitt updated members on contract delays resulting from the change to the new state government financial management system. He reported KYAE hoped to post funding within the next two weeks. He noted the fiscal year 2007 financial forms have been posted on the KYAE Website.

Mr. Pruitt indicated professional development funding and overall funding would be close to the same level as last year's funding.

Members again requested KYAE explore compatibility issues between MUNIS and the KYAE invoice forms.

Sandy Kestner reported she has been involved in interviews for the new director of the Kentucky Adult Educators Literacy Institute and has just returned from attending a GED Math Institute. Kentucky sent a four-person team including a person from the Kentucky Math Center at Northern Kentucky and a math practitioner. The next step is to draft a math plan. Dr. Kestner asked member to submit names of strong math persons, preferably with a degree in math, to work with KYAE on the new math plan.

Janet Hoover discussed the recent four-week media campaign. She indicated KYAE phones were busy and she hoped local programs saw an increase in enrollment during the month of August.

She discussed expansion of the Amazon.com Go, Earn, Do GED project from the 20 counties surrounding the Taylor County facility to counties surrounding the Lexington facility. Amazon.com will reimburse the GED fee, give GED graduates an Amazon.com gift card, and preference in hiring. An open house is planned for the Lexington facility at the end of the month to promote the expansion.

Due to the success of the pilot project with McDonald's in Woodford and Franklin counties, the project is expanding to a regional co-op comprised of 62 restaurants in 32 counties for a three to five week period. It is projected nearly 1 million tray liners and more than a million bag stuffers promoting the GED program will be used.

Ms. Hoover shared that KYAE received several first and second place awards among campaigns in state government for the GED Prove Yourself campaign and the KYAE annual report.

Brenda Morris shared a project with Harlan County TV 10 that profiles ten students per month who talk about the value of adult education and getting a GED.

B.J. Helton reported on the GED Focus Group which was convened in August to delve into why GED numbers have not kept pace with enrollment increases and ways to help increase the numbers.

GED staff are currently working on an online GED demographic form and development of an online GED transcript/diploma request process.

Dr. Helton recently attended the Bridges to Practice learning disabilities training, along with Donna Potter, KYAE staff, and Brenda Morris. Learning disability professional development sessions are being developed and it is anticipated that they will be offered in the Fall and another in the Spring.

Marilyn Lyons reported she is continuing to work on realistic projected goals for adult education for the Council's 2020 Public Agenda.

Stuart Johnston reported many of his staff were involved in the recent technology blitzes which were held in five areas of the state. A core group of 12 KYAE staff trained 535 people at the blitzes.

Mr. Johnston indicated he was looking forward to the KYAE organizational realignment which will allow him to focus more on technology. He is currently evaluating report-writing software that would give providers access to data and the ability to create reports, reviewing Webconferencing software, and exploring the development of a searchable fact database for local program use.

Reecie Stagnolia pointed out the organizational restructuring will afford Sandra Kestner and Joyce Bullock the opportunity to focus on professional development and instructional strategies which is a vitally important part of helping students achieve goals.

NEXT MEETINGS

Meeting dates for the next year were set.

December 8, 2006

March 16, 2007

June 1, 2007

September 14, 2007

ADJOURNMENT

Vice President Hawker thanked the members for making the commitments to be part of the Committee and for their attendance and contributions to today's meeting. The meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.